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SAINT NICHOLAS RESUSCITATES THE THREE YOUTHS
BY BICCI DI LORENZO

A MIRACLE OF SAINT NICHOLAS BY BICCI DI LORENZO

A PICTURE by Bicci di Lorenzo, representing a Miracle of Saint Nicholas,[1] recently given to the Museum by Francis Kleinberger, has an importance in addition to the intrinsic qualities of the work, as it is a companion piece to a painting, also showing a Miracle of Saint Nicholas, which has belonged to the Museum since 1888. Both are from the predella of an altarpiece painted in 1433 for the monastery church of San Nicolò at Parma in the gallery of which city the important panel with the Madonna, Child, and Angels is now preserved.

Bicci di Lorenzo in painting this altarpiece copied or adapted a famous work by Gentile da Fabriano, which was in the church of San Nicolò in Florence. This was the Quaratesi Altarpiece painted in 1425 and now dispersed; the central panel being in the royal collection at Buckingham Palace, the side panels in the Uffizi, and the predella, from two compartments of which our pictures are free copies, in the Vatican. Reproductions are given in Gentile da Fabriano by Colasanti (pp. 133-135). An examination of these will show how Bicci has changed the compositions, spreading them over a wider space but reproducing more or less closely the pose of each figure. Mary Logan Berenson, writing in the Rassegna d'Arte, 1915, p. 209, compares our pictures with the originals. "In competition with the Vatican predelle," she says, "which were conceived if not executed by the master, these imitations are without doubt rather frivolous, but the happiness and fascination of the scene of the Golden Balls are such as to make one almost prefer it to the graver and more compact composition of the original. Bicci does not fail to get the story-telling elements, omitting some of the more solid qualities; the figures are less articulated and massive and the dramatic action is toned down. But they are gay and diverting little works of art, delicious in color and full of agreeableness. Happy the masters who are not imitated by followers inferior to this one!"

The subject of the picture which Mr. Kleinberger has given is the Resuscitation of the Three Boys.[2] It is related that Saint Nicholas during a famine lodged at the house of a man who in the scarcity of provisions was in the habit of stealing children to be butchered and sold as food.

[1] Panel: H. 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.; W. 22$\frac{1}{4}$ in.

[2] For a different interpretation of the same subject exhibited in the Museum, see a wall statue of wood in the Hoentschel Collection, exhibited in Wing F, Room 1.

At dinner the Saint discovered the crime, and going to the tubs where the human remains had been salted down, made over them the sign of the cross and forthwith the three boys were made whole and restored to their waiting parents.

The picture of which this is the mate was given to the Museum in 1888 by Frederic Coudert; the miracle illustrated in it is related in the Golden Legend.[1] After his father and mother died Saint Nicholas "began to think how he might distribute his riches, and not to the praising of the world but to the honor and glory of God. And it was so that one, his neighbor, had then three daughters, virgins, and he was a nobleman: but for the poverty of them together, they were constrained, and in very purpose to abandon them to sin . . . so that by the gain and winning of their infamy they might be sustained. And when the holy man Nicholas knew hereof he had great horror of this villainy, and threw by night secretly into the house of the man a mass of gold wrapped in a cloth. And when the man arose in the morning, he found this mass of gold, and rendered to God therefor great thankings, and therewith he married his oldest daughter. And a little while after this holy servant of God threw in another mass of gold, which the man found, and thanked God, and purposed to wake, for to know him that so had aided him in his poverty. And after a few days Nicholas doubled the mass of gold, and cast it into the house of this man. He awoke by the sound of the gold, and followed Nicholas, which fled from him, and he said to him: 'Sir, flee not away so but that I may see and know thee.' Then he ran after him more hastily, . . . and anon he kneeled down, and would have kissed his feet but the holy man would not, but required him not to tell nor discover this thing as long as he lived."

After being shown for the month in the Room of Recent Accessions the Resuscitation of the Three Boys will be exhibited in Gallery 31, where The Gift of the Golden Balls to the Poor Father with Three Daughters now hangs. B. B.

[1] Vol. II, p. 110.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN KERCHIEFS

IN the articles on Egyptian costume in the BULLETINS of August and October mention was made of the wigs worn by men and women of the better classes. The ancient peasant, it is true, like his modern descendant, labored all day in the fields with nothing to protect his head except a simple white linen or felt skull cap, but the people of the upper classes wore wigs just as the well-to-do

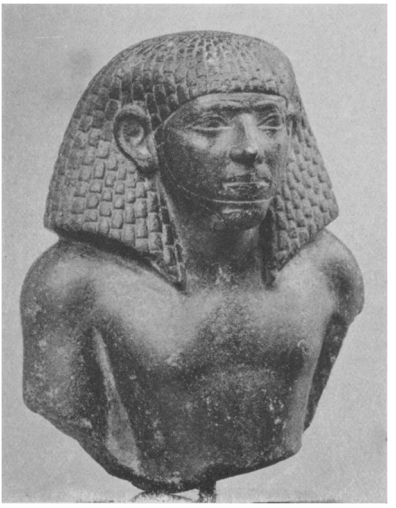


FIG. 1. TYPE OF SHORT WIG OVER WHICH THE KERCHIEF WAS WORN

of the more modern Orient swathe their heads in turbans of cloth. Indeed, the wig of the ancient Egyptian and the turban of the Arab and the Turk had much in common—both were worn over a shaven head, they were worn throughout the day both indoors and out, and both changed with the variations of fashion, at times attaining enormous proportions and bizarre shapes which were supposed to be indicative of the importance, the wealth, or the high rank of the wearer. The enormous and outlandish turbans of the janissaries of two centuries ago, in the Museum at Constantinople, and the marvelously curled and plaited perukes of the grandees of the Egyptian imperial period